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ISLANDERS NOTUIV*

fall so that the two halves lie with the opening upwards, it is an omen that the chief will live long. The pieces of the nut are then tied together and taken to the house of another chief, the friend of the new ruler, and there they are kept in token that the ceremony has been duly performed. Thereupon the fish are divided among the people, the strangers receiving half. This completes the legal ceremonies of accession, and the new chief may now go about freely. But these tedious formalities and others which I pass over are dispensed with when the new chief has proved his title by slaying his predecessor. In that case the procedure is much simplified, but on the other hand the death duties are so very heavy that only rich men can afford to indulge in the luxury of regicide. Hence in the Pelew Islands of to-day, or at least of yesterday, the old-fashioned mode of succession by slaughter is now restricted to a few families of the bluest blood and the longest purses.¹

The Pelew If this account of the existing or recent usage of the Pelew custom Islanders sheds little light on the motives for putting chiefs to death.

shows now regicide ^ we ^ illustrates the business-like precision with which such a may be custom may be carried out, and the public indifference, if not regarded as approval, with which it may be regarded as an ordinary incident of an ordinary *•! | . J . . . J . incident of constitutional government. So far, therefore, the Pelew custom bears out the view that a systematic practice of regicide, however strange and revolting it may seem to us, is perfectly compatible with a state of society in which human conduct and human life are estimated by a standard very different from ours. If we would understand the early history of institutions, we must learn to detach ourselves from the prepossessions of our own time and country, and to place ourselves as far as possible at the standpoint of men in distant lands and distant ages.

¹ J. Kubary, *Die sodakn Einrichtungeu far Pdaucr>* pp. 43-45, 75-78.